

1472.

THE
ART OF PLEASING;

OR,

INSTRUCTIONS FOR YOUTH

In the first Stage of Life,

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS

To the present *EARL OF CHESTERFIELD,*

BY THE LATE

PHILIP EARL OF CHESTERFIELD.

Now first collected.

L O N D O N,

Printed for G. KEARSLEY, No. 46. Fleet-street.

1783.

Price TWO SHILLINGS.



P R E F A C E.

EDUCATION is an object so interesting to individuals, and so important to the community at large, that too much attention cannot be paid to it. Every situation in life, every age, and every person connected in society, are called upon, in some manner, and at some period, to regard that most indispensable duty, upon which depends so much of the happiness of the present age ; so entirely the welfare of the rising generation.

Of those to whom the world is obliged for dispensing useful knowledge on this momentous subject, no one

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can claim more regard than the noble writer of the following letters. His knowledge of the human heart, his patriotism, his philanthropy, and his politeness, have long ago laid the public under obligations to his memory, which even a few exceptionable passages in his correspondence with his son cannot discharge, and which entitle him to the rank and distinction usually paid to those who have been laudably employed in the service of mankind.

The present letters require no evidence to ascertain their authenticity. Every sentiment, and every line, exhibit marks of that pen which so long was devoted to the entertainment and instruction of the public. They were written at a late period of the noble author's life, when it seems probable

P R E F A C E.

he had remarked some mistakes in the system of education which he had adopted for his son. Certain it is, whatever errors may be pointed out in his earlier sentiments on that subject, no such exceptions can be made to his maturer thoughts, as delivered in this volume. His opinions are the result of prudence and observation, and they will carry conviction to every person who affords them the notice they so well deserve.

Were any proofs of the authenticity of these letters necessary, beyond their internal evidence, that proof might be supplied from DR. MATY'S edition of LORD CHESTERFIELD'S WORKS. In a letter to Dr. CHEVENIX, Bishop of Waterford, they are expressly alluded to. "My kinsman
"Mr. STANHOPE, of Mansfield, (says the noble Lord) "has married a niece
" of

“ of Mr. Barnes of Derby, whom
 “ you know. His son, whom I have ta-
 “ ken and adopted, turns out, prodi-
 “ giously well, both as to parts and
 “ learning, and gives me great a-
 “ musement and pleasure *in superin-*
 “ *tending his education, and in some things*
 “ *instructing him myself*; in which I
 “ flatter myself that I do some good,
 “ considering his future rank and
 “ fortune.” * That no man was bet-
 ter qualified for the office he here de-
 clares himself to have undertaken,
 than Lord Chesterfield was, the letters
 now collected will sufficiently testify.
 They were chiefly written during the
 Earl’s residence at Bath, and received
 by his pupil, who was then under the
 care of Dr. Dodd, that unfortunate
 and much to be lamented victim to
 dissipation and extravagance, by
 whom

* MATTY’S edit. of LORD CHESTERFIELD, 4to. vol. 2.
 p. 526.

whom they were copied, and, as is generally believed, transmitted to the press through the disgraceful channel of a provincial magazine.

It having been suggested to the publisher, that instructions so well adapted to general use, and so excellently calculated for the improvement of education, deserved a more general notice than they have hitherto received, he has been induced to collect them together, fully persuaded that the more the knowledge of them is diffused, the more advantageous they will prove to the interests of society, whose well-being so greatly depends on the right direction of youth in the first stage of life, while they are capable of receiving impressions favourable to the practice of those virtues which dignify and adorn human nature.

Lately

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U P O N

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I N

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Chiefly written by the late

E A R L O F C H E S T E R F I E L D

To his son,

P H I L I P S T A N H O P E, E s q.

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ETHIOPIANS,
EGYPTIANS,
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PERSIANS,
GREEKS, and
ROMANS.

T H E

THE
ART OF PLEASING.
IN A SERIES OF LETTERS
FROM THE
EARL OF CHESTERFIELD
TO
MASTER STANHOPE.

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

Bath,

OUR correspondence has hitherto been very desultory and various. My letters have had little or no relation to each other; and I endeavoured to suit them to your age and passion for vanity. I considered you as a child, and trifled with you accordingly; and,
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though I cannot yet look upon you as a man, I shall consider you as being capable of some serious reflection. You are now above half a man; and, before your present age is doubled, you will be quite a man: Therefore, *Paulo majora canamus*.

You already know your religious and moral duties, which indeed are exceedingly simple and plain: the former consists in fearing and loving your Creator, and in observing his laws, which he has written in every man's heart, and which your conscience will always remind you of, if you give it but a fair hearing: The latter, I mean your moral duties, are fully contained in these few words,

words, *Do as you would be done by*. Your classical knowledge, others more able than myself will instruct you in. There remains, therefore, nothing in which I can be useful to you, except to communicate to your youth and inexperience what a long observation, and knowledge of the world, enables me to give you.

I shall then, for the future, write you a series of letters, which I desire you will read twice over, and keep by you, upon the *duty*, the *utility*, and the *means* of pleasing, that is, of being what the French call *amiable*; an art, which must be owned, they possess almost exclusively: They have studied it the most, and they

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practice it the best. I shall, therefore, often borrow their expressions in the following letters, as answering my ideas better than any I can find in my own language.

Remember this, and fix it in your mind, that whoever is not *amiable*, is in truth *no body at all*, with regard to the general intercourse of life: his learning is pedantry, and even his virtue has no lustre. Perhaps my subject may oblige me to say things above your present *forte*; but, in proportion as your understanding opens and extends itself, you will understand them; and then, *Haec olim meminisse juvabit*.

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THE ART OF PLEASING.

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I presume you will not expect elegance, or even accuracy, in letters of this kind, which I write singly for your use. I give you my matter just as it occurs to me. May it be useful to you.

P. S. If you were in this place, it would quite turn your little head; here would be so much of your dear vanity, that you would think rather less, if possible, than most of the company, who saunter away their whole time, and do nothing.

LETTER

LETTER II.

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

Bath,

THE desire of being pleased is universal; the desire of pleasing should be so too. It is included in that great and fundamental principle of morality, of doing to others what one wishes they should do to us. There are indeed some moral duties of a much higher nature, but none of a more amiable: and I do not hesitate to place it at the head of what Cicero calls the *leniores virtutes*.

The benevolent and feeling heart performs this duty with pleasure, and
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in a manner that gives it at the same time; but the great, the rich, the powerful, too often bestow their favours upon their inferiors, in the manner they bestow their scraps upon their dogs; so as neither to oblige man nor dogs. It is no wonder if favours, benefits, and even charities thus bestowed ungraciously, should be as coldly and faintly acknowledged. Gratitude is a burden upon our imperfect nature; and we are but too willing to ease ourselves of it, or at least to lighten it as much as we can.

The *manner*, therefore, of conferring favours or benefits, is, as to pleasing, almost as important as the matter

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matter itself. Take care, then, never to throw away the obligations, which perhaps you may have it in your power to confer upon others, by an air of insolent protection, or by a cold and comfortless manner, which stifles them in their birth. Humanity inclines, religion requires, and our moral duties oblige us, as far as we are able, to relieve the distresses and miseries of our fellow creatures; but this is not all; for a true heart-felt benevolence and tenderness, will prompt us to contribute what we can to their ease, their amusement, and their pleasure, as far as innocently we may. Let us then not only scatter benefits, but even strew flowers for our fellow travellers, in the
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rugged ways of this wretched world.

There are some, and but too many in this country particularly, who, without the least visible taint of ill-nature or malevolence, seem to be totally indifferent, and do not shew the least desire to please; as, on the other hand, they never designedly offend. Whether this proceeds from a lazy, negligent, and listless disposition, from a gloomy and melancholy nature, from ill health, low spirits, or from a secret and sullen pride, arising from the consciousness of their boasted liberty and independency, is hard to determine, considering the various movements of the human heart, and

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the wonderful errors of the human head. But, be the cause what it will, that neutrality, which is the effect of it, makes these people, as neutralities do, despicable, and mere blanks in society. They would surely be roused from their indifference, if they would seriously consider the infinite *utility of pleasing*, which I shall do in my next.

LETTER

L E T T E R I I I .

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

Bath,

AS the utility of pleasing seems to be almost a self-evident proposition, I shall rather hint it to you, than dwell upon it. The person who manifests a constant desire to please, places his, perhaps, small stock of merit, at great interest. What vast returns, then, must real merit, when thus adorned, necessarily bring in? A prudent usurer would with transport place his last shilling at such interest, and upon so solid a security.

The man who is amiable, will make almost as many friends as he does acquaintances. I mean in the current acceptation of the word, but not such sentimental friends as Py-lades or Orestes, Nisus and Euryalus, &c. but he will make people in general wish him well, and inclined to serve him in any thing not inconsistent with their own interest.

Civility is the essential article towards pleasing, and is the result of good nature and of good sense; but good breeding is the decoration, the lustre of civility, and only to be acquired by a minute attention to, and experience of good company. A good natured
plough-

ploughman or foxhunter, may be intentionally as civil as the politest courtier; but their manner often degrades and vilifies their matter; whereas, in good breeding, the *manner* always adorns and dignifies the *matter* to such a degree, that I have known it give currency to base coin. We may truly say, in this case, *materiam superat opus*.

Civility is often attended by a ceremoniousness, which good breeding corrects, but will not quite abolish. A certain degree of ceremony is a necessary out-work of manners, as well as of religion: it keeps the forward and petulant at a proper distance, and is a very small restraint to the sensible, and to the well bred part of
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the world. We find in the Tale of a Tub, that *Peter* had too much pomp and ceremony, *Jack* too little ; but *Martin's* conduct seems to be a good rule for both worship and manners ; and good sense and good breeding pursue this true medium. In my next, I shall consider the *means* of pleasing.

P. S. I am sorry I can send you no venison this year ; but I have no doe-venison this time, the season has been so unfavourable. You must celebrate your natal day this year without it, which you will do best by reflecting that you are now ten years old, and that you have no time to lose in trifling childish dissipation. You must apply now, or never.

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LETTER IV.

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

Bath,

THE means of pleasing vary according to time, place, and person; but the general rule is the trite one, Endeavour to please, and you will infallibly please to a certain degree; constantly show a desire to please, and you will engage people's self-love in your interest; a most powerful advocate. This, as indeed almost every thing else, depends on attention, or more properly *les attentions*: Be, therefore, minutely attentive to the circumstances of time, place, and person, or you may happen to offend,

send, where you intend to please; for people, in what touches themselves, make no allowances for slips or inadvertencies.

To be *distract* in company is unpardonable, and implies a contempt for it, and is not less ridiculous than offensive. There is little difference between a dead man, and a *distract*; what difference there is, is entirely to the advantage of the former, whose insensibility every body sees is not voluntary. Some people most absurdly, affect distraction, as thinking that it implies deep thought and superior wisdom; but they are greatly mistaken, for every body knows, that, if natural, it is a great weakness
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of the mind, and an egregious folly affected. A wise man, instead of not using the senses which he has, would wish them all to be multiplied, in order to see and hear, at once, whatever is said or done in company.

Be you then attentive to the most trifling thing that passes where you are; have, as the vulgar phrase is, your eyes and your ears always about you. It is a very foolish, though a very common saying, "I really did not mind it;" or "I was thinking of quite another thing at that time." The proper answer to such ingenious excuses, and which admits of no reply, is, why did you not mind it; you was present when it was said or
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done? Oh! but you may say, you was thinking of quite another thing; if so, why was you not in quite another place proper for that important other thing, which you say you was thinking of? But, you will say, perhaps, that the company was so silly, that it did not deserve your attention: That, I am sure, is the saying of a silly man; for a man of sense knows that there is no company so silly, that some use may not be made of by attention.

You should have (and it is to be had, if you please) a versatility in attention, which you may instantaneously apply to different objects and persons as they occur. Remember,
that,

that, without these *attentions*, you will never be fit to live in good company, nor indeed in any company at all; and the best thing you can do will be to turn *Chartreux*. When you present yourself, or are presented for the first time in company, study to make the first impression you give of yourself as advantageous as possible. This you can only do, at first, by what solid people commonly call trifles, which are *air*, *dress*, and *address*. Here invoke the assistance of the graces: even that silly article of dress is no trifle upon these occasions.

Never be the first nor the last in the fashion. Wear as fine cloaths as men of your rank commonly do, and

rather better than worse ; and when you are well dressed once a day, do not seem to know that you have any cloaths on at all, but let your motions be as easy as they could be in your night gown. A fop values himself upon his dress : but a man of sense will not neglect it, in his youth at least. The greatest fop I ever saw, was at the same time the greatest sloven : for it is an affected singularity of dress, be it of what sort it will, that constitutes a fop, and every body will prefer an over-dressed fop to a slovenly one. Let your address, when you first come into company, be modest, but without the least bashfulness or sheepishness ; steady, without impudence ; and unembarrassed, as if
you

you were in your own room. This is a difficult point to hit, and therefore deserves great attention; nothing but a long usage in the world, and in the best company, can possibly give it.

A young man without knowledge of the world, when he first goes into a fashionable company, where most are his superiors, is commonly either annihilated by *mauvaise honte*, or, if he rouses and lashes himself up to what he only thinks a modest assurance, he runs into impudence and absurdity, and consequently offends, instead of pleasing. Have always, as much as you can, that *air de dour-*
seur,

ceur, which never fails to make favourable impressions, provided it be equally free from an insipid smile, or a pert smirk.

LETTER

LETTER V.

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

Bath.

CAREFULLY avoid an argumentative, and disputative turn, which too many people have, and some even value themselves upon, in company; and when your opinion differs from others, maintain it only with modesty, calmness, and gentleness; but never be eager, loud, or clamorous; and, when you find your antagonist beginning to grow warm, put an end to the dispute by some genteel *badinage*. For, take it for granted, if the two best friends in the world dispute about the most trifling subject imaginable,

ginable, they will, for the time, find a momentary alienation from each other. Disputes upon any subject, are a sort of trial of the understanding, and must end in the mortification of one or other of the disputants. On the other hand, I am far from meaning that you should give an universal assent to all that you hear said in company; such an assent would be mean, and in some cases criminal; but blame with indulgence, and correct with *douceur*.

It is impossible for a man of sense not to have a contempt for fools, and for a man of honour not to have an abhorrence of knaves; but you must gain upon yourself, so as
not

not to discover, either in their full extent. They are, I fear, too great a majority to contend with, and their number makes them formidable, tho' not respectable. They commonly hang together, for the mutual use they make of each other. Shew them a reserved civility, and let them not exist with regard to you. Do not play off the fool, as is too commonly done by would-be wits, nor shock the knave unnecessarily, but have as little as possible to do with either; and remember always, that whoever contracts a friendship with a knave or a fool, has something bad to do or to conceal. A young man, especially at his first entering into the world, is generally judged of by the

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company he keeps ; and it is a very fair way of judging : and tho' you will not, at first, be able to make your way, perhaps, into the best company, it is always in your power to avoid bad. It may be that you will ask me, how I define *good* and *bad* company ? and I will do it as well as I can ; for it is of the greatest importance to know the difference.

Good company consists of a number of people of a certain fashion, (I do not mean birth,) of whom the majority are reckoned to be people of sense, and of decent characters ; in short, of those who are allowed universally to be, and are called good company. It is possible, nay probable, that

that a fool or two may sneak, or a knave or two intrude into such a company : the former, in hopes of getting the reputation of a little common sense, and the latter, that of some common honesty. But, *ubi plura nitent*, like Horace, you must not be offended *p aucis maculis*.

Bad company is, whatever is not generally allowed to be good company ; but there are several gradations in this as in the other, and it will be impossible for you, in the common course of life, not to fall sometimes into bad company ; but get out of it as soon, and as well as you can. There are some companies so blasted and scandalous, that to have been with

them twice, would hurt your character both as to virtue and parts; such is the company of bullies, sharpers, jockies, and low debauchees either in wine or women, not to mention fools. On the other hand, do not, while young declaim, and preach against them like a Capuchin: you are not called upon to be a repairer of wrongs, or a reformer of manners. Let your own be pure, and leave others to the contempt or indignation they deserve.

There is a third sort of company, which, without being scandalous, is vilifying and degrading; I mean, what is called *low* company, which young men of birth and fashion, at
their

their first appearance in the world are too apt to like from a degree of bashfulness, *mauvaise honte*, and laziness, which is not easily rubbed off. If you sink into this sort of company but for one year, you will never emerge from it, but remain as obscure and insignificant as they are themselves. Vanity is also a great inducement to keep low company; for a man of quality is sure to be the first man in it, and to be admired and flattered, though, perhaps, the greatest fool in it. Do not think I mean, by low company, people of no birth; for birth goes for nothing with me, nor, I hope, with you; but I mean, by low company, obscure, insignificant people, unknown, and unseen in the
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polite part of the world, and distinguished by no one particular merit or talent, unless, perhaps, by soaking and sitting out their evenings ; for drinking is generally the dull and indecent occupation of such company.

There is another sort of company which I wish you to avoid in general, though now and then, (but seldom), there may be no harm in seeing it ; I mean the company of wags, witlings, buffoons, mimicks, and merry fellows, who are all of them commonly the dullest fellows in the world, with the strongest animal spirits. If from mere curiosity you go into such company, do not wear in it a severe, philosophical face of contempt of their illiberal mirth,

mirth, but content yourself with acting a very inferior part in it; contract no familiarity with any of the performers, which would give them claims upon you that you could not with decency either satisfy or reject: call none of them by their Christian names, as Jack, Frank, &c. but use rather a more ceremonious civility with them than with your equals; for nothing keeps forward and petulant puppies at a proper distance so effectually as a little ceremony.

LETTER

L E T T E R VI.

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

Bath,

BAD company is much easier defined than good ; what is bad, must strike every body at first sight ; folly, knavery, and profligacy, can never be mistaken for wit, honour, and decency. Bad company have . . . ; but in good, there are several gradations from good to the best ; merely, good, is rather free from objections than deserving of praise. Aim at the best ; but what is the best ? I take it to be those societies of men or women, or a mixture of both, where great
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politeness, good-breeding, and decency, though, perhaps, not always virtue, prevail.

Women of fashion and character, I do not mean absolutely unblemished, are a necessary ingredient in the composition of good company ; the *attention* which they require, and which is always paid them by well-bred men, keeps up politeness, and gives a habit of good-breeding ; whereas men, when they live together without the lenitive of women in company, are apt to grow careless, negligent, and rough, among one another. In company, every woman is every man's superior, and must be addressed with respect, nay more, with flattery, and you

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need not fear making it too strong; such flattery is not mean in your part, nor pernicious to them; for it can never give them a greater opinion of their beauty or their sense than they had before: Therefore make the dose strong; it will be greedily swallowed.

Women stamp the character, fashionable or unfashionable, of all young men at their first appearance in the world. Bribe them with minute attentions, good-breeding, and flattery: I have often known their proclamation give a value and currency to base coin enough, and, consequently, it will add a lustre to the truest sterling: Women, though otherwise called sensible, have all them, more or less weak-

weakness, singularities, whims, and humours, especially vanity ; study attentively all their failings, gratify them as far as you can, nay, flatter them, and sacrifice your own little humours for them. Young men are too apt to shew a dislike, not to say an aversion and contempt, for old, and ugly women ; which is both impolite and injudicious ; for there is a respectful politeness due to the whole sex. Besides, the ugly and the old, having the least to do themselves, are jealous of being despised, and never forgive it ; and I could suppose cases, in which you would desire their friendship, or at least their neutrality. Let it be a rule with you never to shew that contempt which very often you will have,

and with reason, for a human creature; for it will never be forgiven. An injury is sooner pardoned than an insult.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

Bath.

IF you have not command enough over yourself to conquer your humours, as I hope you will, and as I am sure every rational creature may have, never to go into company while the fit of ill humour is upon you. Instead of company's diverting you in those moments, you will displease, and probably shock them; and you will part worse friends than you met: But whenever you find in yourself a disposition to fullness, contradiction, or testiness, it will be in vain to seek

seek for a cure abroad. Stay at home, let your humour ferment and work itself off. Chearfulness and good humour are of all qualifications the most amiable in company; for, though they do not necessarily imply good nature and good breeding, they act them, at least, very well, and that is all that is required in mixt company.

I have indeed known some very ill natured people, who were very good humoured in company; but I never knew any body generally ill humoured in company, who was not essentially ill natured. When there is no malevolence in the heart, there is always a chearfulness and ease in the countenance

nance and manners. By good humour and chearfulness, I am far from meaning noisy mirth and loud peals of laughter, which are the distinguishing characteristics of the vulgar and of the ill bred, whose mirth is a kind of a storm. Observe it, the vulgar often laugh, but never smile; whereas, well bred people often smile, but seldom laugh. A witty thing never excited laughter; it pleases only the mind, and never distorts the countenance: a glaring absurdity, a blunder, a silly accident, and those things that are generally called comical, may excite a laugh, though never a loud nor a long one, among well-bred people.

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Sudden passion is called short-lived madness ; it is a madness indeed, but the fits return so often in cholerick people, that it may well be called a continual madness. Should you happen to be of this unfortunate disposition, which God forbid, make it your constant study to subdue, or, at least, to check it: when you find your choler rising, resolve neither to speak to, nor answer the person who excites it; but stay till you find it subsiding, and then speak deliberately. I have known many people, who, by the rapidity of their speech, have run away with themselves into a passion. I will mention to you a trifling, and, perhaps, you will think a ridiculous receipt, towards

towards checking the excess of passion, of which I think that I have experienced the utility myself. Do every thing in a minuet-time; speak, think, and move always in that measure, equally free from the dulness of slow, or the hurry or huddle of quick time. This movement will moreover allow you some moments to think forwards, and the Graces to accompany what you say or do; for they are never represented as either running or dozing. Observe a man in a passion, see his eyes glaring, his face inflamed, his limbs trembling, and his tongue stammering and faltering with rage, and then ask yourself calmly, whether upon any account you would be that

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human wild beast. Such creatures are hated and dreaded in all companies, where they are let loose, as people do not chuse to be exposed to the disagreeable necessity of either knocking down those brutes, or being knocked down by them. Do you on the contrary, endeavour to be cool and steady upon all occasions; the advantages of such a steady calmness are innumerable, and would be too tedious to relate. It may be acquired by care and reflection; if it could not, that reason which distinguishes men from brutes, would be given us to very little purpose: As a proof of this, I never saw, and scarcely ever heard of a quaker in a passion. In truth, there is, in that sect, a decorum, and decency, and

and an amiable simplicity, that I know in no other.

Having mentioned the Graces in this letter, I cannot end it, without recommending to you, most earnestly, the advice of the wisest of the antients, to sacrifice to them devoutly and daily : when they are propitious, they adorn every thing, and engage every body. But are they to be acquired ? Yes, to a certain degree, by attention, and observation, and assiduous worship. Nature, I admit, must first have made you capable of adopting them, and then observation and imitation will make them, in time, your own

There are graces of the mind, as well as of the body ; the former give an engaging turn to the thoughts and the expressions : the latter to the motions, attitudes, and addrefs. No man perhaps ever possessed them all. He would be too happy that did. But, if you will attentively observe those graceful and engaging manners which please you most in other people, you may easily correct what will please others in you, and engage the *majority* of the graces on your side ; insure the casting vote, and be returned *amiable*. There are people whom the *Precieuse* of Moliere very justly, though very affectedly, calls *les anti-podes des graces* ; if these unhappy people

ple are formed by Nature invincibly *mauſſades* and awkward, they are to be pitied rather than blamed or ridiculed. But Nature has diſinherited few people to that degree.

LETTER VIII.

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

Bath.

IF God gives you wit, which I am not sure that I wish you, unless he gives you at the same time at least an equal portion of judgment, to keep it in good order, wear it like your sword in the scabbard, and do not brandish it to the terror of the whole company. If you have real wit, it will flow spontaneously, and you need not aim at it; for, in that case, the rule of the gospel is reversed; and it will prove, *seek*, and you shall not find. Wit is a shining quality, that every
body

body admires ; most people aim at it, all people fear it, and few love it, unless in themselves. A man must have a good share of wit himself to endure a great share in another. When wit exerts itself in satire, it is a most malignant distemper ; wit, it is true, may be shown in satire ; but satire does not constitute wit, as many imagine. A man of wit ought to find a thousand better occasions of showing it.

Abstain, therefore, most carefully from satire, which, though it fall on no particular person in company, and momentarily, from the malignancy of the human heart, pleases all ; yet, upon reflection, it frightens all too. E-
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very one thinks it may be his turn next, and will hate you for what he finds you could say of him, more than be obliged to you for what you do not say. Fear and hatred are next-door neighbours ; the more wit you have, the more good nature and politeness you must show, to induce people to pardon your superiority ; for that is no easy matter. Learn to shrink yourself to the size of the company you are in. Take their tone, whatever it may be, and excel in it, if you can, but never pretend to give the tone. A fine conversation will no more bear a dictator, than a free government will.

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The character of a man of wit is a shining one, that every man would have, if he could, though it is often attended with some inconveniences : The dullest alderman ever aims at it ; cracks his dull joke, and thinks, or at least hopes, that it is wit ; but the denomination is always formidable, and very often ridiculous. The *titular wits* have commonly much less wit than petulance and presumption : They are at best the *Rieurs de leur quartier*, in which narrow sphere they are at once feared and admired.

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You

You will perhaps ask me, and justly, how considering the delusion of self-love and vanity, from which no man living is absolutely free, how you shall know, whether you have wit or not? To which the best answer I can give you is, not to trust to the voice of your own judgment, for it will deceive you, nor to your ears, which will always greedily receive flattery, if you are worth being flattered; but trust only to your eyes, and read in the countenances of good company their approbation or dislike of what you say. Observe carefully too, whether you are sought for, solicited, and in a manner pressed into good company. But even all this will

will not absolutely ascertain your wit : therefore do not, upon this encouragement, flash your wit in peoples faces *a ricochets*, in the shape of *bons mots*, epigrams, or smart repartees.

Appear to have rather less than more wit than you really have. A wise man will live at least as much within his wit as his income. Content yourself with good sense and reason, which at the long-run are ever sure to please every body who has either ; if wit comes in the bargain, welcome it, but never invite it. Bear this truth always in your mind, that you may be admired for your wit, if you have any ; but that nothing but good sense and good qualities can

make you be beloved ; They are substantial every day's wear. Wit is for *le jour de gala*, where people go chiefly to be stared at.

P. S. I received your last letter, which is very well written. I shall see you next week, and bring you some pretty things from hence ; because I am told you are a very good boy, and have learned very well.

LETTER

LETTER IX.

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

Bath.

THERE is a species of minor wit, which is much used and much more abused ; I mean raillery. It is a most mischievous and dangerous weapon, when in unskilful or clumsy hands ; and it is much safer to let it quite alone, than to play with it ; and yet almost every body do play with it, though they see the daily quarrels and heart-burnings it occasions. In truth, it implies a supposed superiority in the *raillure* to the *raillé*, which no man likes even the suspicion

cion of, in his own case, though it may divert him in other people.

An innocent *raillerie* is often inoffensively begun, but very seldom inoffensively ended, for that depends upon the *raillé*, who, if he cannot defend himself, will grow brutal; and, if he can, very possibly his *railleur*, baffled, becomes so. It is a sort of trial of wit, in which no man can bear to have his inferiority made appear.

The character of a *railleur* is more generally feared, and more heartily hated than any one. I know that in the world, the injustice of a bad man is sooner forgiven, than the insults of a witty one; the former only
hurts

hurts one's liberty and property, but the latter hurts and mortifies that secret pride which no human breast is free from. I will allow that there is a sort of raillery which may not only be inoffensive, but even flattering, as when, by a genteel irony, you accuse people of those imperfections which they are most notoriously free from, and, consequently, insinuate that they possess the contrary virtues. You may safely call Aristides a knave, or a very handsome woman an ugly one. Take care, however, that neither the man's character, nor the lady's beauty be in the least doubtful. But this sort of raillery requires a very light and steady hand to administer it. A little too strong, it
may

may be mistaken into an offence ; and a little too smooth, it may be thought a sneer, which is a most odious thing.

There is another sort, I will not call it wit, but merriment and buffoonry, which is *mimicry*. The most successful mimic in the world is always the most absurd fellow, and an ape is infinitely his superior. His profession is to imitate and ridicule those natural defects and deformities, for which no man is in the least accountable, and in the imitation of which, he makes himself, for the time, as disagreeable and shocking as those he mimics. But I will say no more of those creatures
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who only amuse the lowest rabble of mankind.

There is another sort of human animals, called Wags, whose profession is to make the company laugh immoderately, and who always succeed, provided the company consist of fools; but who are equally disappointed in finding that they never can alter a muscle in the face of a man of sense. This is a most contemptible character, and never esteemed even by those who are silly enough to be diverted by them.

Be content for yourself with sound good sense, and good manners, and let wit be thrown into the bargain,

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where it is proper and inoffensive. Good sense will make you be esteemed; good manners, beloved; wit gives a lustre to both. In whatever company you happen to be, whatever pleasures you are engaged in, though perhaps not of a very laudable kind, take care to preserve a great personal dignity; I do not in the least mean a pride of birth and rank, that would be too silly; but I mean a dignity of character. Let your moral character of honesty and honour be unblemished, and even unsuspected. I have known some people dignify even their vices, first, by never boasting of them; and, next, by not practising them in an illiberal and indecent manner. If they were ad-
dicted

dicted to women, they never degraded and dirtied themselves in the company of infamous prostitutes: if they loved drinking too well, they did not practice that beastly vice in beastly companies; but with those whose good humour in some degree seemed to excuse it, though nothing can justify it. When you see a drunken man, as probably you will see many, study him with attention, and ask yourself soberly, whether you would, upon any account, be that beast, that disgrace to human reason. The Lacedemonians very wisely made their slaves drunk, to deter their children from being so; and with good effect, for nobody ever yet heard of a Lacedemonian drunk.

LETTER X.

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

Bath.

IF there is a lawful and proper object of raillery, it seems to be a coxcomb, as an usurper of the common rights of mankind: but here some precautions are necessary. Some wit, and great presumption, constitutes a coxcomb; for a true coxcomb must have wit. The most consummate coxcomb I ever knew, was a man of the most wit, but whose wit, boasted with presumption, made him too big for any company, where he always usurped the seat of empire, and crowded out common sense.

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Raillery seems to be a proper rod for these offenders ; but great caution and skill are necessary in the use of it, or you may happen to catch a Tartar, as they call it, and then the laughter will be against you. The best way with these people is to let them quite alone, and give them rope enough.

On the other hand, there are many, and perhaps more who suffer from their timidity, and *mauvaise honte*, which sink them infinitely below their level. Timidity is generally taken for stupidity, which, for the most part, it is not, but proceeds from a want of education in good company. Mr.
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Addison was the most timid and awkward man I ever saw ; and no wonder, for he had been wholly cloistered up in the cells of Oxford till he was five and twenty years old. La Bruyere says, and there is a great deal of truth in it, *Qu'on ne vaut dans ce monde que ce que l'on veut valoir* ; for in this respect, mankind shew great indulgence, and value people at pretty near the price they set on themselves, if it be not exorbitant.

I could wish you to have a cool intrepid assurance, with great seeming modesty, never *demonte*, and never forward. Very awkward timid people, who have not been used to keep good company, are either ridiculously

ly bashful, or absurdly impudent. I have known many a man impudent from shamefacedness, endeavouring to act a reasonable assurance, and lashing himself to what he imagined to be a proper and easy behaviour. A very timid bashful man is annihilated in good company, especially of his superiors; he does not know what he says or does; and it is a ridiculous agitation, both of body and mind. Avoid both extremes, and endeavour to possess yourself with coolness and steadiness: Speak to the king with full as little concern, though with more respect, as you would to your equals. This is the distinguishing characteristic of a gentleman, and a man of the world.

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The way to acquire this most necessary behaviour is, as I have told you before, to keep company, whatever difficulty it may cost you at first, with your superiors, and with women of fashion, instead of taking refuge, as too many young people do, in low or bad company, in order to avoid the restraint of good breeding. It is, I confess, a very difficult, not to say an impossible thing, for a young man, at his first appearance in the world, and unused to the ways and manners of it, not to be disconcerted and embarrassed, when he first enters what is called the best company. He sees that they stare at him, and if they happen to laugh, he is sure that they laugh at him. This awkwardness is not to be blamed, as it often proceeds

ceeds from laudable causes, from a modest diffidence of himself, and a consciousness of not yet knowing the modes and manners of good company. But let him persevere with a becoming modesty, and he will find that all people of good nature and good breeding will, at first, help him out, instead of laughing at him; and then a very little usage of the world, and attentive observation, will soon give him a proper knowledge of it.

It is the characteristic of low and bad company, which commonly consist of wags and witlings, to laugh and disconcert, and, as they call it, bamboozle a young fellow of inge-

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nuous modesty. You will tell me, perhaps, that, to do all this, one must have a good share of vanity : I grant it ; but the great point is, *Ne quid nimis* ; for I fear Monsieur Rochefoucault's maxim is too true, *Que la vertue n'iroit pas loin, si la vanite ne lui tenoit compagnie.* A man who despairs of pleasing will never please ; a man that is sure that he shall always please wherever he goes, is a coxcomb ; but the man who hopes and endeavours to please will most infallibly please.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

Bath.

THE egotism is the most usual and favourite figure of most people's rhetoric, and which I hope you will never adopt, but, on the contrary, most scrupulously avoid. Nothing is more disagreeable or irksome to the company, than to hear a man either praising or condemning himself; for both proceed from the same motive, vanity. I would allow no man to speak of himself, unless in a court of justice, in his own defence, or as a witness. Shall a man speak in his own praise? No; the hero of his own little tale

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always puzzles and disgusts the company, who do not know what to say, or how too look. Shall he blame himself? No; vanity is as much the motive of his condemnation as his panegyric.

I have known many people take shame to themselves, and with a modest contrition, confess themselves guilty of the most cardinal virtues. They have such a weakness in their nature, that they cannot help being too much moved with the misfortunes and miseries of their fellow creatures, which they feel, perhaps, more, but, at least, as much as they do their own. Their generosity, they are sensible, is imprudence; for they are apt to carry it too far,
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from the weak, the irresistible beneficence of their nature. They are possibly too jealous of their honour, too irascible when they think it is touched; and this proceeds from their unhappy warm constitution, which makes them too sensible upon that point; and so on of all the virtues possible.—A poor trick, and a wretched instance of human vanity, and what defeats its own purpose.

Do you be sure never to speak of yourself *for* yourself, nor *against* yourself; but let your character speak for you: Whatever *that* says will be believed; but whatever you say of it will not be believed, and only make you odious and ridiculous. Be constantly on
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your guard against the various snares and effects of vanity and self-love; it is impossible to extinguish them; they are without exception in every human breast; and, in the present state of nature, it is very right it should be so. But endeavour to keep within the due bounds, which is very possible. In this case dissimulation is meritorious, and the seeming modesty of the hero or the patriot adorns their other virtues.

Vanity is the more odious and shocking to every body, because every body without exception has vanity, and two vanities can never love one another, any more than, according to the vulgar saying, two of a trade can.

can. If you desire to please men and women, address yourself to their passions and weaknesses; gain their hearts, and let their reason do its worst against you.

LETTER

LETTER XII.

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

Bath.

I KNOW that you are generous and benevolent in your nature ; but that, though the principal point, is not quite enough ; you must seem so too. I do not mean ostentatiously ; but do not be ashamed, as many young fellows are, of owning the laudable sentiments of good nature and humanity which you really feel. I have known many young men who desired to be reckoned men of spirit, affect a hardness and unfeelingness which in reality they never had ; their conversation

fation is in the decisive and menacing tone; they are for breaking bones, throwing people out of the windows, cutting off ears; and all these fine declarations they ratify with horrid and silly oaths; all this to be thought men of spirit. Astonishing error this! which necessarily reduces them to this dilemma: If they really mean what they say, they are brutes, and if they do not, they are fools for saying it. This, however, is a common character among young men. Carefully avoid this contagion, and content yourself with being calmly and mildly resolute and steady, when you are thoroughly convinced you are in the right; for this is true spirit. What

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is commonly called in the world a man or a woman of spirit, are the two most detestable and most dangerous animals that inhabit it. They are wrong-headed, captious, jealous, offending without reason, and defending with as little. The man of spirit has immediate recourse to his sword, and the woman of spirit to her tongue; and it is hard to say which of the two is the most mischievous weapon. It is too usual a thing in many companies, to take the tone of scandal and defamation; some gratify their malice, and others think they shew their wit by it; but I hope you will never adopt this tone. On the contrary, do you always take the favorable side of the question; and, with-
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out any offensive and flat contradiction, seem to doubt, and represent the uncertainty of reports, where private malice is at least very apt to mingle itself. This candid and temperate behaviour will please the whole candid company, though a sort of gentle contradiction to their unfavourable insinuations, as it makes them hope they may in their turn find an advocate in you.

There is another kind of offensiveness often used in company; which is, to throw out hints, and insinuations, only applicable to, and felt by one or two persons in the company, who are consequently both embarrassed, and angry, and the more so, as they are

unwilling to shew that they apply those hints to themselves. Have a watch over yourself; never to say any thing that either the whole company, or any one person in it, can reasonably or probably take ill; and remember the French saying, *Qu'il ne faut pas parler de corde dans la maison d'un pendu.* Good nature universally charms, even those who have none; and it is impossible to be *aimable* without both the reality and the appearance of it.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

Bath.

I HAVE more than once recommended to you, in the course of our correspondence, attention; but I shall frequently recur to that subject, which is as inexhaustible as it is important. Attend carefully, in the first place, to human nature in general, which is pretty much the same in all human creatures, and varies chiefly by modes, habits, education, and example: analyse, and, if I may use the expression,

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anatomize it ; study your own, and that will lead you to know other people's; carefully observe the words, the looks, and gestures of the whole company you are in, and retain all their little singularities, humors, tastes, affections, and antipathies, which will enable you to please or avoid them, occasionally, as your judgement may direct you.

I will give you the most trifling instance of this that can be imagined, and yet will be sure to please. If you invite any body to dinner, you should take care to provide those things which you have observed them to like more particularly, and not to have those things which you know they have

have an antipathy to. These trifling things go a great way in the art of pleasing, and the more so, from being so trifling, that they are flattering proofs of your regard to those persons. These things are what the French call *des attentions*; which, to do them justice, they study and practice more than any people in Europe.

Attend to, and look at whoever speaks to you, and never seem *distract* or *revereur*, as if you did not hear them at all, for nothing is more contemptible, and consequently more shocking. It is true, you will by this means often be obliged to attend to things not worth any body's attention; but it is a necessary sacrifice to be made
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to good manners in society. A minute attention is also necessary to time, place and character; a *bon mot* in one company is not so in another, but, on the contrary, may prove offensive. Never joke with those whom you observe to be at the time pensive and grave; and, on the other hand, do not preach and moralize in a company full of mirth and gaiety. Many people come into company full of what they intend to say in it themselves, without the least regard to others; and thus charged up to the muzzle, are resolved to let it off at any rate. I knew a man who had a story about a gun, which he thought a good one, and that he told it very well. He tried all means in the world

world to turn the conversation upon guns ; but if he failed in his attempt, he started in his chair, and said he heard a gun fired : but when the company assured him they heard no such thing, he answered, perhaps then I was mistaken ; but, however, since we are talking of guns—and then told his story, to the great indignation of the company.

Become, as far as with innocence and honour you can, all things to all men, and you will gain a great many friends. Have *des prevenances* too, and say or do what you judge before hand will be most agreeable to them, without their hinting at or expecting it. It would be endless to spe-

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cify

cify the numberless opportunities a man has of pleasing, if he will but make use of them; your own good sense will suggest them to you, and your good nature, and even your interest will induce you to practice them. Great attention is to be had to times and seasons: for example, at meals talk often, but never long at a time; for the frivolous bustle of servants, and often the more frivolous conversation of the guests, which chiefly turns upon kitchen stuff and cellar stuff, will not bear any long reasonings or relations. Meals are and were always reckoned moments of relaxation of the mind, and sacred to easy mirth and social chearfulness: Conform to this custom, and furnish your quota

quota of good humour; but be not induced by example to the frequent excess of gluttony or intemperance; the former inevitably produces dullness, the latter madness.

Observe the *a propos* in every thing you say or do. In conversing with those who are much your superiors, however easy and familiar you may and ought to be with them, preserve the respect that is due to them. converse with your equals with an easy familiarity, and at the same time great civility and decency. But too much familiarity, according to the old saying, often breeds contempt, and sometimes quarrels. I know nothing more difficult in common behaviour than to

fix due bounds to familiarity ; too little implies an unfociable formality, too much destroys friendly and social intercourse. The best rule I can give you to manage familiarity is, never to be more familiar with any body than you would be willing, and even wish that he should be with you. On the other hand, avoid that uncomfortable reserve and coldness which is generally the shield of cunning, or the protection of dulness. The Italian maxim is a wise one *il volto sciolto, i pensieri stretti* ; that is, let your countenance be open and your thoughts close. To your inferiors you should use an hearty benevolence in your words and actions, instead of a refined politeness, which
would

would be apt to make them suspect that you rather laughed at them : For example, your civility to a mere country gentleman must be in a very different way to what you would use to a man of the world ; your reception of him should seem hearty, and rather coarse, to relieve him from the embarrassment of his own *mauvaise honte*. Have attention even in the company of fools; for though they are fools, they may, perhaps, drop, or repeat something worth your knowing, and which you may profit by. Never talk your best in the company of fools; for they would not understand you, and would perhaps suspect that you jeered them, as they commonly call it; but talk only the plainest com.

common sense to them, and very gravely, for there is no jesting nor *badinage* with them. Upon the whole, with attention, and *les attentions*, you will be sure to please; without them, you will be sure to offend.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

MY DEAR LITTLE BOY,

Bath.

CAREFULLY avoid all affectation either of body or of mind. It is a very true and a very trite observation, that no man is ridiculous for being what he really is, but for affecting to be what he is not. No man is awkward by nature, but by affecting to be genteel. I have known many a man of common sense pass generally for a fool, because he affected a degree of wit that God had denied him. A ploughman is by no means awkward in the exercise of his trade, but would
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be exceedingly ridiculous, if he attempted the air and graces of a man of fashion. You learned to dance; but it was not for the sake of dancing; it was to bring your air and motions back to what they would naturally have been if they had had fair play, and had not been warped in youth by bad examples and aukward imitations of other boys.

Nature may be cultivated and improved both as to the body and the mind; but it is not to be extinguished by art; and all endeavours of that kind are absurd, and an inexpressible fund for ridicule. Your body and mind must be at ease to be agreeable; but affectation is a particular

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restraint, under which no man can be genteel in his carriage or pleasing in his conversation. Do you think your motions would be easy or graceful, if you wore the cloaths of another much slenderer or taller than yourself? Certainly not; it is the same thing with the mind, if you affect a character that does not fit you and that nature never intended for you. But do not mistake, and think that it follows from hence that you should exhibit your whole character to the public, because it is your natural one. No, many things must be suppressed and many things concealed in the best character: Never force nature; but it is by no means necessary to shew it all.

Discretion must come to your assistance, that sure and safe guide through

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life;

life; discretion, that necessary companion to reason, and the useful *garde feu*, if I may use the expression, to wit and imagination. Discretion points out the *a propos*, the *decorum*, the *ne quid nimis*, and will carry a man with moderate parts further than the most shining parts would without it. It is another word for judgment, though not quite synonymous to it. Judgment is not upon all occasions required, but discretion always is. Never affect nor assume a particular character; for it will never fit you, but will probably give you a ridicule; leave it to your conduct, your virtues, your morals, and your manners, to give you one. Discretion will teach you to have particular attention to your *mœurs*, which we have no one word in our language to express exactly. *Morals* are too much, *manners* too little. Decency comes the nearest to it, though rather short of it; Cicero's word *decorum* is properly the thing; and I see no reason why that expressive word should not be adopted

ted and naturalized in our language : I have never scrupled using it in that sense.

A propos of words. Study your own language more carefully than most people do ; get a habit of speaking it with propriety and elegance ; for nothing is more disagreeable than to hear a gentleman talk the barbarisms, the solicisms, and the vulgarisms of porters. Avoid, on the other hand, a stiff and formal accuracy, especially what the women call hard words, when plain ones as expressive are at hand. The French make it their study *bien narrer* but are apt *narrer trop*, and with too affected an elegancy.

The three commonest topics of discourse are religion, politics, and news. All people think they understand the two first perfectly, though they never studied either ; and are therefore very apt to talk both dogmatically and ignorantly, consequently with warmth : But religion is by no

means a proper subject of conversation in a mixed company ; it should only be of treated among a very few people of learning, for mutual instruction. It is too awful and respectable a subject to become a familiar one. Therefore never mingle yourself in it any further, than to express an universal toleration of all errors in it conscientiously entertained ; for, every man has as a good right to think as he does, as you have to think as you do ; nay, in truth, he cannot help it.

As for politics, they are still more universally understood ; and as every one thinks his private interest more or less concerned in them, nobody hesitates to pronounce decisively upon them, not even the ladies, the copiousness of whose eloquence is more to be admired than the conclusiveness of their logic. It will be impossible for you to avoid engaging in these conversations, for there are hardly any others ; but take care to do it coolly,

ly, and with great good humour; and whenever you find that the company begin to be heated, and noisy for the good of their country, be only a patient hearer, unless you can interpose by some agreeable *badinage*, and restore good humour to the company. And here I cannot help observing to you, that nothing is more useful either to put off or to parry disagreeable and puzzling affairs, than a good humoured and genteel *badinage*: I have found it so by long experience. But this *badinage* must not be carried to *mauvais plaisanterie*; it must be light, without being sententious: and in short *have that je ne sçai quoi* which every body feels, and nobody describes.

I shall now for a time suspend the course of these letters; but as the subject is inexhaustible, I shall occasionally resume it: In the mean time, believe, that a man, who does not generally please is nobody; and that
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a constant endeavour to please, will infallibly please to a certain degree at least,

F I N I S.

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Vide Critical Review published the first of January 1783, See also Mr. Maty’s Review for last month.

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